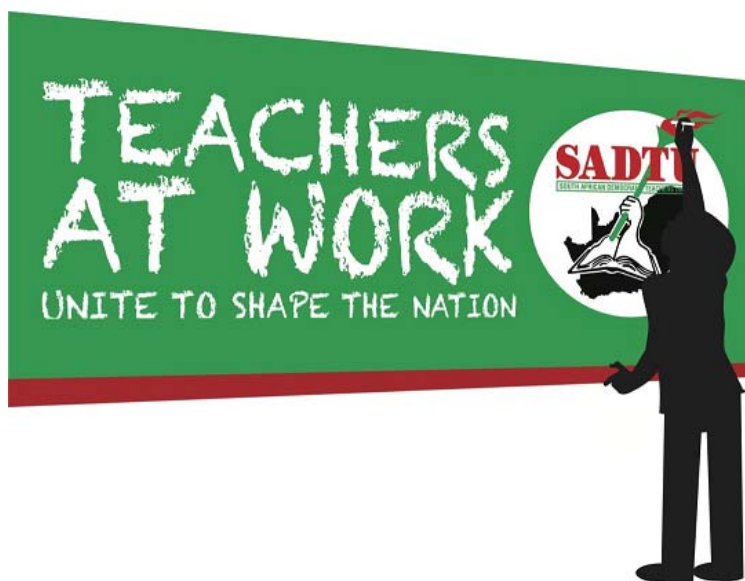




Communist University Introductions

These texts may be used as “openings to discussion” of the original reading texts that are supplied by the CU. They are not intended to be authoritative or conclusive. They are contributions to discussion like any other such contributions. The introductions are not a substitute for the reading texts.

Education Course, Part 0, Introduction



Introduction to “Education”

Education is the means by which children are brought fully into society. The original Latin, from which the English word “education” is derived, means “leading out”.

The ruling ideas of any class-divided society are the ideas of its ruling class. Modern society is bourgeois, and so education in modern society is set up to transfer the ruling, bourgeois ideas to each new generation.

Because bourgeois society frames the individual as the basic productive economic unit of society, in the form of commodity labour-power for sale in the labour market, education in bourgeois society must validate this anti-human, anti-social self-understanding of the individual, and of each one by the others.

In bourgeois society, people are supposed to be “alone together”.

Two principles, first, the social imperative of education in general, and second, the commodification of the individual person, are at odds in bourgeois society. They co-exist, they cannot be reconciled, so they conflict.

In parallel with this contradiction, is another contradiction. The method of education is dialogical interaction between people. The educational process is a human relationship of the most tender, compassionate kind. It is social.

Yet the obligatory formation of commodity labour power as a function of bourgeois education renders the loved and loving human into an item for sale. In the exchange of commodity labour-power for money, the distortion of the human social relationship is hidden away under the appearance of a relationship between things.

The formation of commodity labour power is a process which renders the teacher into a transient part of the process. The human relationship is abandoned, leaving the student with skill, or knowledge, an abstract quality which is no longer human. This skill or knowledge is an attribute that is commensurable with the same attribute, present in other individuals. It can be measured. Students in South Africa can be compared with students in Japan, North or South America, India and Sweden, or any other place.

This is done by what are known as examinations.

As with torture, the results of examinations are unreliable. Yet, like torture, they continue to be used everywhere. The practice of examination is increasing in bourgeois society, not decreasing. In Britain, children as young as five are being required to pass examinations, and if they fail the examinations, there are lifelong consequences for those little children.

Revolutionary education

A revolutionary form of education would reverse the priority of bourgeois education, so that the socialisation of the children was given priority over the rendering of each child into a piece of commensurable commodity labour-power.

The prerequisites for such revolutionary education would include a strong ideology of education within the teaching corps. In South Africa this ideology is tacit, not explicit. It is not that there is an overtly bourgeois “pedagogy of the bourgeoisie”. It is rather that there is a scarcity of openly-expressed educational theory of any kind.

Reactionaries and progressives combine to affirm the necessity of being “professional”, as measured by an eclectic mixture of empirical criteria. But there is little dialogue about the fundamental theory of education: What is it for? What is it about?

Education in South Africa is supposed to be “societal”, but “societal” reverts instantly to “parents-and-teachers”, to narrow concerns about career prospects, and so it inevitably re-enters the confines of bourgeois utilitarianism.

Ours is a political course that explores the place of education within the polity of human society. It may draw the conclusion that there is no dividing line between education and politics – as Lenin, for example, thought.

It should at least discover the prerequisites for a revolutionary education.

Like the other fifteen main CU courses, the Education course is in ten parts, serialised over ten weeks. There will be a main item in each part, supported by up to three additional or alternative items. Each item will be an original text, sent out with a brief introduction or “opening to discussion”.

Education, Part 1



[Paulo Freire, 1921 - 1997](#)

People's Education for People's Power

Our method is to take a text, and discuss it. This method is modelled on the theory and practice of the late Paulo Freire. It is appropriate, then, to begin our course on Education itself, with Freire.

In the first place, Freire can assist us greatly in defining what we are pursuing in this course on Education. We are looking for a pedagogical theory: a theory of teaching and learning. What is it for? What is education for? What is educational theory for? Paulo Freire, a Brazilian, is an example of one who explored such questions, and he did so within a liberation-struggle context, akin to our own.

In the first sentence of Paulo Freire's "[Pedagogy of The Oppressed](#)" (attached, please find Chapter 1, or use the link below) Freire "problematizes" what he calls "humanisation". That sentence says:

"While the problem of humanization has always, from an axiological point of view, been humankind's central problem, it now takes on the character of an inescapable concern."

Axiology is the philosophical study of value. Freire declares his principle value. It is humanisation. It corresponds directly to the South African concept of "ubuntu".

"But while both humanization and dehumanization are real alternatives, only the first is the people's vocation," says Freire, asserting this political and moral principle as a starting point.

In doing so, Freire stands side-by-side with Karl Marx, who, in his masterpiece "Capital", and all his life, wanted to restore humanity to itself.

This is what education is for.

Let us look at some more of Marx's, and Freire's words.

In his 1844 [Introduction to a Critique of Hegel's Philosophy of Right](#), at the gestation, if not quite the birth of "Marxism", Marx, referring to religion, wrote:

"Criticism has plucked the imaginary flowers on the chain not in order that man shall continue to bear that chain without fantasy or consolation, but so that he shall throw off the chain and pluck the living flower."

Above all, Marx wanted humans to be human. Criticism was not to crush, but to set humans free.

Similarly, Freire's educational method is called "critical pedagogy". It rests on the fundamental question of philosophy: the relation of mind to matter (Subject to Object). It asks to be judged according to that principle. So on page 3 of Chapter One of the "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", Freire writes:

"... one cannot conceive of objectivity without subjectivity. Neither can exist without the other, nor can they be dichotomized. The separation of objectivity from subjectivity, the denial of the latter when analyzing reality or acting upon it, is objectivism. On the other hand, the denial of objectivity in analysis or action, resulting in a subjectivism which leads to solipsistic positions, denies action itself by denying objective reality. Neither objectivism nor subjectivism, nor yet psychologism is propounded here, but rather subjectivity and objectivity in constant dialectical relationship."

Explicitly embracing his connection with Marx, Freire continues:

"To deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naive and simplistic. It is to admit the impossible: a world without people. This objectivistic position is as ingenuous as that of subjectivism, which postulates people without a world. World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction. Man does not espouse such a dichotomy; nor does any other critical, realistic thinker. What Marx criticized and scientifically destroyed was not subjectivity, but subjectivism and psychologism."

The significance of the human Subject in Freire's theoretical scheme is clear. Education as the refreshment and renewal of humanity is declared by these words from the last paragraph of his Chapter 1:

"Teachers and students (leadership and people), co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality and thereby coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge. As they attain this knowledge of reality through common reflection and action, they discover themselves as its permanent re-creators."

The Communists, in their own minds and in their intentions, seek to educate, organise and mobilise, not so as to command the working class and the general masses, but help to set them free.

The problem of how to do so is exactly the problem that Freire addresses in “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed.” It requires the formulation quoted above: “World and human beings do not exist apart from each other, they exist in constant interaction.”

Freire writes about leadership and people both being human Subjects, “co-intent on reality”. This is what gives meaning both to education, and to politics. Leadership (teacher) and masses (learners) are “co-intent on reality”, coping together with the open reality of human life within an objective material universe.

We are talking here of revolutionary pedagogy. We are talking here of teaching with a purpose and a reason that anyone can understand, i.e. we are teaching with “intentionality” that students can understand and potentially share as equals.

We are talking of liberation. In South Africa this concept is called **“people’s education for people’s power”**.

In the next chapter we will dwell upon the dreadful mistakes that can be made if we fall into the errors of what Freire calls “the banking theory of education”.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Pedagogy of The Oppressed, Chapter 1, 1970, Freire.](#)

Education, Part 1a



[Paulo Freire, 1921 - 1997](#)

Down with the Banking Theory!

It was Paulo Freire who gave us the word “conscientise”.

It was Paulo Freire, more than any other, who showed how the bourgeois education system, with its “**banking**” theory of pedagogy (please read today’s text, attached, and downloadable via the link at the bottom of this document), is not well designed to educate learners in the true sense of the word “educate”, but is principally and intentionally designed to reproduce the class relations that suit the ruling bourgeois class.

Education, which should by nature liberate the student, is made by the bourgeoisie into a means of repression, said Freire.

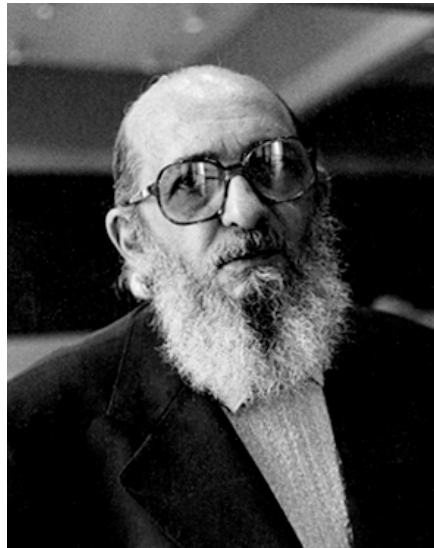
How can we make sure that education becomes part of the building of people’s power? To ask such a question is to “problematise” education. To ask such a question is to begin a “dialogue” about education.

Freire thought that the education of the oppressed, if it was patronising, would be counter-productive. It would reproduce and reinforce the features of the oppressive bourgeois state. The method for avoiding the reproduction of oppression through education would have to be different and new, he thought.

So in the dialogical method that Paulo Freire devised and called the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, or otherwise Critical Pedagogy, there is no elementary, junior, senior, matriculation, undergraduate, post-graduate, doctorate or professor level. Teachers are learners and learners are teachers; all are free-willing subjects, capable of leadership at any moment.

As much as there may be a room and a gathering of individuals, each known by name, and a “codification” which is the text or other object prepared for the occasion, yet the dialogue admits no imaginary limits. The Freirean gathering is not sheltered. It is one of the essentials of Freirean Pedagogy that we refuse the fiction of the sheltered classroom, and instead recognise that the oppressor is around us and even within us, while we strive to liberate ourselves through our mutual, pedagogical dialogue.

In Freirean practice, there is no such thing as a basic level, or an advanced level. All that we can do is to practice a common process of “problematism”, beginning with education itself.



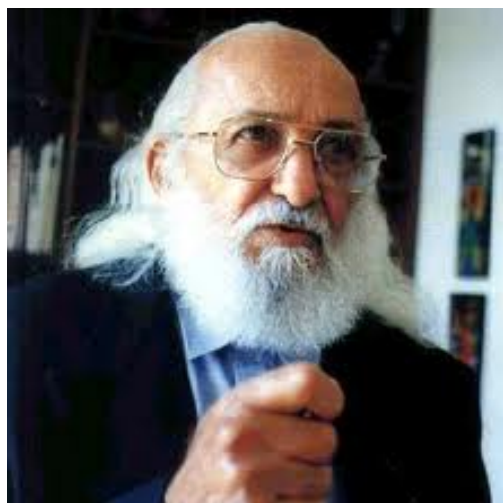
For the late Freire (pictured here and at the top), and for the Freireans of today, all education is a political act and a social act, an act of liberation and an act of self-liberation.

In Freire's work, philosophy, politics and education are considered together without any sharp borders between them.

Chapter two is the shortest and the easiest of the four chapters of Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed". Please, for the sake of this course and of all the CU courses, download it and read it.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Pedagogy of The Oppressed, Chapter 2, 1970, Freire.](#)

Education, Part 1b



[Paulo Freire, 1921 - 1997](#)

Not Activism, Not Blah

Action / Reflection = word = work = praxis

Sacrifice of action = verbalism

Sacrifice of reflection = activism

What separates humanist philosophy from other kinds of philosophy is that we humanists see life as an interaction between the human Subject and the Objective universe. Others either believe in pure (subjective) will, or in pure (objective) fate.

This philosophy is not a compromise or an arbitrary “middle way”. Instead, it represents a real dialectical unity-and-struggle-of-opposites.

The human Subject defines the universe, and the universe contains the human Subject.

In Chapter 3 of the Pedagogy of the Oppressed, Freire manages to express all of this with great power, and then to develop it into an educational “praxis” (theory-and-practice), which is dialogue.

Here are the first few paragraphs:

Verbalism without action is idle chatter

“As we attempt to analyze dialogue as a human phenomenon, we discover something which is the essence of dialogue itself: the word. But the word is more than just an instrument which makes dialogue possible; accordingly, we must seek its constitutive elements. Within the word we find two dimensions, reflection and action, in such radical interaction that if one is sacrificed - even in part - the other immediately suffers. There is no true word that is not at the same time a praxis. Thus, to speak a true word is to transform the world.

“An unauthentic word, one which is unable to transform reality, results when dichotomy is imposed upon its constitutive elements. When a word is deprived of its dimension of action, reflection automatically suffers as well; and the word is changed into idle chatter, into verbalism, into an alienated and alienating “blah.” It becomes an empty word, one which cannot denounce the world, for denunciation is impossible without a commitment to transform, and there is no transformation without action.”

Activism is action for action’s sake, and it makes dialogue impossible

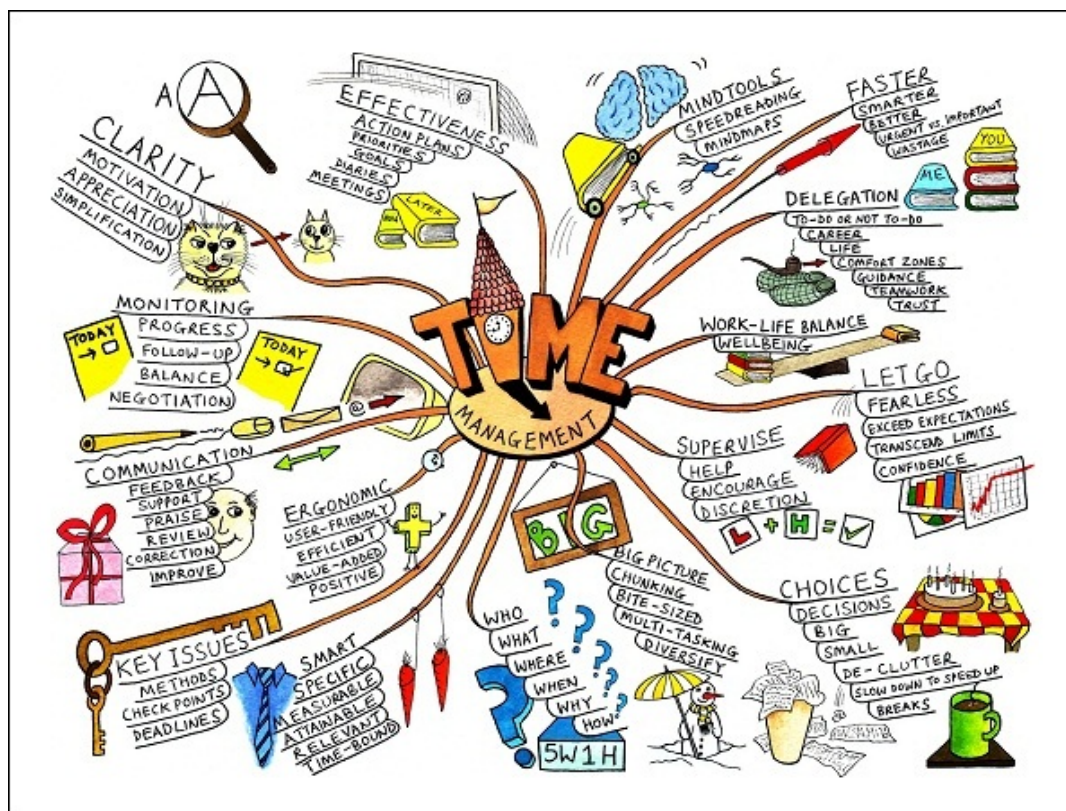
“On the other hand, if action is emphasized exclusively to the detriment of reflection, the word is converted into activism. The latter - action for action's sake - negates the true praxis and makes dialogue impossible. Either dichotomy, by creating unauthentic forms of existence, creates also unauthentic forms of thought which reinforce the original dichotomy.

“Human existence cannot be silent nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world. To exist humanly is to name the world, to change it. Once named, the world in its turn reappears to the namers as a problem and requires of them a new naming. Human beings are not built in silence, but in word, in work, in action-reflection.

“But while to say the true word - which is work, which is praxis - is to transform the world, saying that word is not the privilege of some few persons, but the right of everyone. Consequently no one can say a true word alone - nor can she say it for another, in a prescriptive act which robs others of their words.”

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Pedagogy of The Oppressed, Chapter 3, 1970, Freire.](#)

Education, Part 1c



Use Your Head

The fourth item in the first part of the ten-week Communist University “Education” course is our own “conspectus” (overview or synopsis) of Tony Buzan’s book, “Use Your Head” (attached; download linked below).

We have sometimes in the past been defensive about the inclusion of this book in a Communist course. The author Buzan does not propose, or proceed from, any overt political premises. If anything he appears at first sight to resemble a utilitarian bourgeois “management guru” or “motivational speaker”. What makes his work stand out, at first, from others of that kind, is its great practical effectiveness, and not any obvious political aspect.

Yet, after all the years of forcing Buzan’s work to cohabit with Marxist texts, it becomes clearer to this VC why it fits in so well: It is dialectical! And it is intentional! Therefore it is Freirean, whether consciously or unconsciously so.

From a practical point of view, Buzan’s appeal is that he offers assistance with faster, more purposeful reading; with memorising; and with note-taking, particularly using his invention, the “mind-map” technique, of which an example is given above.

These techniques are just what students need to help them get through their studies – and just what conventional education often failed to give them.

Students used to be obliged to try to learn, before having learned *how* to learn. Buzan filled this gap very well.

But what underlies Buzan’s approach? It is not that he was lucky to stumble upon three techniques, like a prospector discovering diamonds. No. What distinguishes the mind-map, in particular, from other forms of note-taking characterised by lists and bullet-points, is that it begins and ends as a “unity and struggle of opposites”. It is a representation, in one glance, of the way in which any phenomenon is the product, or resultant, of many abstract dynamic forces, or vectors, pulling in different directions.

The mind-map is a very good illustration of exactly what is meant by “dialectics”.

The other main characteristic of Buzan’s approach is its “intentionality”, to borrow a term from Paulo Freire’s vocabulary. Towards the end of Chapter 1 of Freire’s “The Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, Freire quotes Alvaro Vieira Pinto saying that intentionality is “*the fundamental property of consciousness*”, remarking that this

concept is “*of great importance for the understanding of a problem-posing pedagogy*”.

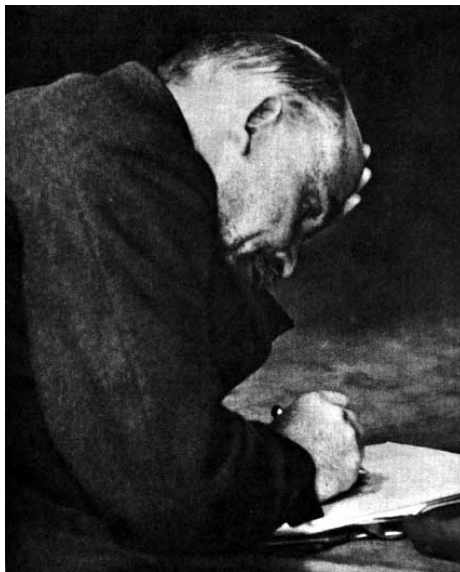
Buzan’s approach is full of intentionality. There is no question, for Buzan, of wandering about, learning for learning’s sake, in a random, eclectic way. Buzan says that you must be looking for a result.

Karl Marx, in the 11th Thesis on Feuerbach, said that while the philosophers have interpreted it, the point is to change the world.

Thus intentionality, as well as dialectics and dialogue, are common and basic themes in Freire, Buzan and Marx.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: Tony Buzan, [Use Your Head, 1974, Conspectus by D Tweedie](#).

Education, Part 2



Lenin, writing

All education is political

All education is political. Education prepares the individual child, and each entire new generation, to take its place within the polity. Education confirms the existing polity, reproducing it.

In 1983 somebody wrote:

“At the base of the modern social order stands not the executioner but the professor. Not the guillotine, but the (aptly named) doctorate d’état is the main tool and symbol of state power. The monopoly of legitimate education is now more important, more central than the monopoly of legitimate violence” [Gellner, *Nations and nationalism*. Cornell University Press. 1983].

“Political Education” becomes a category separate from education in general, only because education belongs to the ruling system, under a certain ruling class. Even though it is a society in revolution, and its government is formed by a revolutionary liberation movement, it is not possible to teach what we call political education, in schools, in South Africa.

Nothing illustrates the nature of class power more clearly than this. The political education given in schools confirms the *status quo*. It is conservative and it is bourgeois. It does not even admit to being political.

“The taxpayer” is a bourgeois, and will only pay for political education that preserves the position of the bourgeoisie. In the nineteenth year after the first universal-franchise election in South Africa, this fact stares at us, but few of us stare back. The common critique of education is rather that it is not bourgeois enough.

Even those “radicals” who, for example, would expropriate land from white farmers on a large scale and without compensation, give little thought to the nature of education. The people who would settle on that land, if any, would be educated as bourgeois, would only be capable of reproducing a bourgeois economy on that land, and would demand the installation of bourgeois schools on that land. This would not be radical change, but it would be confirmation of the *status quo*.

Is there any conception of what a revolutionary school might be? This second part of our course on education looks at some past conceptions of what it might be, starting with Lenin.

Lenin on Education

“...we have to abandon the old standpoint that education should be non-political; we cannot conduct educational work in isolation from politics.”

“That idea has always predominated in bourgeois society. The very term ‘apolitical’ or ‘non-political’ education is a piece of bourgeois hypocrisy...”

“In all bourgeois states the connection between the political apparatus and education is very strong, although bourgeois society cannot frankly acknowledge it.”

“We are living in an historic period of struggle against the world bourgeoisie, which is far stronger than we are. At this stage of the struggle, we have to safeguard the development of the revolution and combat the bourgeoisie in the military sense and still more by means of our ideology through education, so that the habits, usages and convictions acquired by the working class in the course of many decades of struggle for political liberty - the sum total of these habits, usages and ideas - should serve as an instrument for the education of all working people. It is for the proletariat to decide how the latter are to be educated. We must inculcate in the working people the realisation that it is impossible and inexcusable to stand aside in the proletariat’s struggle...”

“We must re-educate the masses; they can be re-educated only by agitation and propaganda. The masses must be brought, in the first place, into the work of building the entire economic life. That must be the principal and basic object in the work of each agitator and propagandist, and when he realises this, the success of his work will be assured.”

The above words are taken from Lenin’s speech to the 1920 All-Russian Conference of Political Education Workers, our main text for this part.

Lenin does not leave his audience in doubt as to his intentions.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Lenin, Speech to All-Russia Political Education Workers Conference, 1920.](#)
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[Lev Vygotsky, 1896-1934](#)

The socialist alteration of man

Lev Vygotsky was a Soviet scientist, educational researcher, theoretician and practitioner who died more than 80 years ago. At the present time his is one of the most recognised names in the history of pedagogical studies, and his fame appears to be growing.

Later in the course we will move to a text by Andy Blunden explaining [Vygotsky's Theory of Child Development](#). Among other things, that paper underlines Vygotsky's attention to detail, based on close observation of children. Vygotsky's reputation rests upon his collection and organisation of empirical data, as much as upon the theoretical science that built upon these data, and upon the wider and revolutionary science of his time.

In today's attached and downloadable text it becomes clear that Vygotsky found it necessary to place his work within an overview of education, and of the place of education within the most comprehensive view of humanity and of humanity's historical and prehistorical development.

In a SADTU document that we will return to later in this course, a diagram is used which shows the field of education as bounded on four sides by a band that contains the words "Political", "Cultural", "Social" and "Economic". But in fact these four are not distinguishable from each other in any organic sense. They do not represent any kind of unity-and-struggle-of-opposites. "Political", "Cultural", "Social" and "Economic" are all words for the same thing.

It is necessary to place education within a context external to the “classroom”, so as to find a broad definition of education, and not a weak, contingent and utilitarian one. The separation into virtual bullet-points of “Political”, “Cultural”, “Social” and “Economic” tells us nothing. They all represent one thing, which is “Politics”.

Acknowledging this allows us to develop the context, not as a list, but as a concentric spheres. This is what we are doing in this part of our course on “Education”, starting with Lenin, and moving to Vygotsky, Cole, Engels and Spinoza.

Later in the course we will come to Hegel, whose philosophy of human development is the one that is to this day still the most advanced, most extensive, and most concrete philosophy available. Hegel’s philosophical system is the one that was used by by Karl Marx, Frederick Engels, V I Lenin – and Lev Vygotsky.

The contextual sphere around education would be the politics of the country and of the moment, or in other words what is called the “conjuncture”, made up of the balance of class forces and the specific, material circumstances of the place and time.

In bourgeois education, consideration of such context is to a large extent, if not entirely, excluded. History, for example, as taught in school, stops short of the present moment, and refrains from connecting the past to the present so as to draw political lessons. The Constitution might be taught, but in a conservative way, so as to present it (falsely) as separate and apart from the politics of the moment.

As we have seen with Paulo Friere, a pedagogy that would suit the oppressed majority of the people must refuse to exclude the facts of daily political life from education in this way. The classroom of the oppressed must rightfully be in the world, and not isolated from the world.

Lenin helps us to see education in a general context of class conflict. Lenin places education within a full political-theoretical context, thereby allowing it to be understood as part of human history in general.

The text given here shows that Vygotsky felt the need to recognise both the political struggles of the moment (i.e. the formation of the revolutionary proletarian republic, the Soviet Union), and also the revolutionary theory upon which those struggles were based. He needed to place education within the lived, political society, and within the on-going development of human beings as a whole.

This leads Vygotsky to suggest that there must be a theory of human development that is not only spiritual and subjective, but that is also material, and even biological. We will look further at this question in the next item within this part, noting the line

of thought, without necessarily endorsing every aspect of it. The point is to realise that education exists within the widest possible human context, whose boundaries are the boundaries between the socially known, and the unknown.

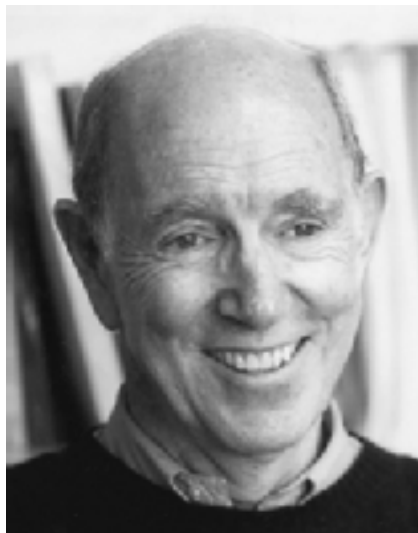
Suffice it here to read Vygotsky's own words, and to note that this most famously experimental and empirical of educationists (in the sense of basing his understanding on observation of real children) found it necessary to reach out to the furthest margins of pre-history, and out into the disciplines of biology, evolutionary science, and philosophy, so as to be able to locate and to brace his work in a firm fashion.

Humanism is that kind of philosophy that says that human beings create themselves, and that the more they do so, the more socially conscious (i.e. scientific) they become of what they are doing. The more conscious is human development, the faster is the rate at which it proceeds. As Engels and Spinoza both remarked: Freedom is the recognition of necessity. Having understood necessity, humans are free to grasp it. This is the only kind of freedom that they have.

Without a sight of a wider context, the educator is proceeding as if blindfolded.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Vygotsky, The socialist alteration of man, 1930](#).
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Education, Part 2b



[Mike Cole, born 1938](#)

Cultural History

“Phylogeny and cultural history in ontogeny”

As can be seen from the sub-title of this article, Mike Cole is never afraid to use long, unfamiliar words, which makes it not to be ideal for use as a reading. It is also a bit too long. But there are good reasons for including it.

One is that like Vygotsky's article, it shows an educationalist at work who refuses any boundaries to the work of an educationalist. Not even the "Arrow of Time" is sacred for Cole. Education is involved in "Phylogenesis" (the creation of the human type, including the physical type), as well as "Ontogenesis" (the creation of the individual human life-trajectory).

Another reason for using this article is because it is an available example of Cole's writing, with Professor Cole being a major figure in education theory, and the current principle challenger to the hegemony of the ideas of the late [Jean Piaget](#).

Another reason is to show the continuity between Engels, Vygotsky and Cole. We will in due course discover that this continuity embraces other educationists. None of these thinkers is an isolated case. There is a strong school of educational theorists with sufficient worked-out theory, based on empirical research, and tested in practice, to support a revolutionary education system in South Africa, or anywhere else on earth. Jean Piaget's utilitarian-bourgeois ideas are not the end of educational history.

Something else to look at in this essay is the comparison between Japan and the USA in motherhood behaviour, early schooling, baseball and corporate culture. All of that is in Part 5.

In particular, the preference of the Japanese for (early childhood) classes of 15 or more corresponds with the experience of the CU, where dialogue is the means of learning, and "keeping the pot boiling" is the main practice. In the CU, we relax when attendance reaches the level of 15, because at that level of attendance it is not at all difficult to sustain a discussion for the given period, and so to leave with more questions than answers, as we should.

What one might want to discuss, using this article as a common stock, could be the outer boundaries of educational theory, or lack thereof. In South Africa, the view presented for public discussion by the bourgeois mass media is that school education is a limited thing, watched over by anxious parents and bossy teachers, that produces a narrowly-restricted result, or at best a sparse set of "outcomes", the whole being gauged by the matriculation examinations.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Cole, Phylogeny and cultural history in ontogeny, 2007](#).



Frederick Engels

Man made by labour

Human beings create themselves

As well as being short, the attached essay of Engels' ("The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man") is very easy to read and to understand. Yet it explains a lot that is hardly covered by the conventional education of a "Western" bourgeois or bourgeois-dominated person.

What is there to disagree with in it? Very little. But some. Engels used his Germanic language in the manner of his time. So it becomes "Man", even if what is meant is "Woman and Man".

Man, or Woman the Creator?

Evelyn Reed added to Engels' understanding, by pointing out (in "Womens' Evolution") that it was women who invented and perfected the technologies upon which we continue to rely today. The increase of wealth occasioned by the technological advances made by women brought pre-historic humans to the brink of history.

The pre-history of society, according to Engels, is "social organisation existing previous to recorded history", while recorded history is also and inevitably "the history of class struggles". These quotations are from the Communist Manifesto, Bourgeois and Proletarians, first line, and Engels' footnote to it. Engels wrote more extensively about history and pre-history in "The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State".

At the dawn of history, several things happened at the same time. Property, the state, class struggle, the oppression of women, and writing, all came about at once. The new system of class division required all of these things, and we will, in the next part, see that it required schooling (i.e. an institutionalised and professional education system), as well.

“The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man” proceeds to mention capitalism, before it breaks off.

Engels returned to the question of pre-historic human development, and the historical development of class struggle, seven years later after the death of his friend Karl Marx. In Marx’s papers, Engels found work, based partly on studies by the US writer Henry Morgan, and composed these into the full book called “The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State”.

Not only Marx and Engels, but also one of the great founders of philosophy, Baruch de Spinoza, wrote about the self-development of human beings through learning. In the following widely-quoted passage, Spinoza wrote:

As far as the 'method for finding out the truth' is concerned, 'the matter stands on the same footing as the making of material tools.... For, in order to work iron, a hammer is needed, and the hammer cannot be forthcoming unless it has been made; but, in order to make it, there was need of another hammer and other tools, and so on to infinity. We might thus vainly endeavour to prove that men have no power of working iron.

'But as men at first made use of the instruments supplied by nature to accomplish very easy pieces of workmanship, laboriously and imperfectly, and then, when these were finished, wrought other things more difficult with less labour and greater perfection. . . . So, in like manner, the intellect, by its native strength, makes for itself intellectual instruments, whereby it acquires strength for performing other intellectual operations, and from these operations gets again fresh instruments, or the power of pushing its investigations further, and thus gradually proceeds till it reaches the summit of wisdom.'

B. de Spinoza (1632-1677),

Improvement of the Understanding, Ethics and Correspondence

We can usefully note here that Lev Vygotsky was familiar with all of these writings (i.e. those of Engels and those of Spinoza).

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Engels, The Part played by Labour in the Transition from Ape to Man, 1876.](#)**



Ancient classroom at [Sumer](#)

History, Culture and Schooling

Professor Michael Cole's long essay "Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives on the Developmental Consequences of Education" has been divided for the CU's purposes into three parts.

It begins by asking fundamental questions about the place of schooling in society, the nature of education, and whether schooling and education are ever, or could ever be, the same thing.

Mike Cole undertakes to *"venture into a brief synopsis of historical variations in the ways that adults organize the lives of the young so that they acquire knowledge and skills deemed essential to communal life."*

Early in the essay, Cole writes: *"It was widely assumed ['in the 19th century'] that cross-cultural comparisons were simultaneously cross-historical. So-called primitive societies were taken as evidence about early stages of history for all human groups."*

This is a reference to the views, not so much of anthropologists (who were always divided), as of Hegel, Marx and Engels and their successors, the communists of today, who have an explicit, scientific, philosophical and historical theory of development, which is always human development.

Note that the first line of the Communist Manifesto, after the preamble, is: *"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggles,"* to which Frederick Engels, in the 1888 edition, added: *"That is, all written history."* Engels proceeds to refer to his work *"The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State."*

This view of development is not actually “19th century” but is at base simply humanist, and as such, it is as old as recorded history, as much as reactionary, anti-humanist ideas have always and up to the present time, been part of the same history.

Cole mentions some of the more recent anti-humanist ideologies such as the “post-modernism” that attacks all (what they call) “master narratives” (also, elsewhere, referred to as “grand narratives”). Cole claims to be prepared to be inconclusive about this, but we in our course will not be content to leave the matter like that.

For one reason, theories of “diversity” are not easily distinguished from theories of racialism. For that reason alone, in South Africa, the option for humanism is not in doubt from the point of view of the liberation movement.

This brings us close to the heart of the question of education: Whether it has a moral content or not? And whether it can be revolutionary, or not?

We will proceed, during this part 3 of our course, after reading Cole, to touch on Hegel, and on the way in which a conscious morality can be conceived of as integral to the theory of human development, and consequently, of education, and therefore, of schooling.

Cole’s reservations do not prevent him from making a firm distinction between the pre-historic societies wherein education is indistinguishable from life in general, and what he refers to as the “sea change” of civilization, starting in the Middle East, when schooling becomes a separate institution, and very clearly an instrument of class-division that elevates the ruling class, while subordinating the exploited classes.

From this base Cole proceeds, in our second division of his essay, to “*Consequences of Schooling in Post-Colonial Societies*”. We will take this as the next item of this week’s part of the course. Suffice it to note at this point that Professor Cole, based at the University of California in San Diego, appears compelled to discuss education as a whole in terms of the problems of Imperialism, in what he refers to as “Post-Colonial Societies”.

And indeed the problems of Imperialism and of education cannot be separated from the general human struggle for freedom.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Cole, Perspectives, Part 1, The Advent of Schooling, 2005](#).**
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Education, Neo-Colonial Style

In the second part of his essay called *“Cross-Cultural and Historical Perspectives on the Developmental Consequences of Education”*, Mike Cole is telling us quite plainly that the ideology underlying education in the era of neo-colonialism is racist and patronising, based on the assumption that unschooled people are not adults, and that what makes them adults, is schooling.

“C.P. Hallpike summarized decades of psychological research comparing the intellectual performance of educated and non-educated people of various ages on Piagetian and a wide variety of other cognitive tasks. With very few exceptions, the schooled participants outperformed those who had not attended school. These differences between schooled and non-schooled children led him to conclude that most of the time, ‘primitives’ do indeed think like small children [Hallpike, 1979].”

Whereas Cole’s own findings, together with his colleagues Sharp and Lave, following research in Yucatan, Mexico, were:

“... the information-processing skills which school attendance seems to foster could be useful in a variety of tasks demanded by modern states, including clerical and management skills in bureaucratic enterprises, or the lower-level skills of record keeping in an agricultural cooperative or a well-baby clinic.”

In other words, school prepared the children for a capitalist society, and not for life in general.

The remainder of the text describes various means of “managing diversity” in schools. The four scenarios given by Cole towards the end of this excerpt are not hopeful.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Cole, Perspectives, Part 2, Post-Colonial Consequences, 2005](#).



Schooling Never Neutral

Mike Cole's conclusions, given here as the last of three parts to his essay, includes the following paragraph:

"Formal schooling is never socially neutral. Even presumably neutral skill acquisition presumes the value-laden activities they were designed to accomplish, and it is usually accompanied by ideological considerations that exaggerate the actual use value of the knowledge acquired."

Not all of Cole's conclusions are as unambiguous as the one above. For example, the first of his conclusions is:

Formal schooling arises as part of the division of labor in societies when they reach a certain scale in terms of number of people.

Societies "reach a certain scale" as a consequence of changes in production. Formal schooling is one of those things that are consequences of change in relations of production. The initial change in the relations of production had to do with the division of society into antagonistic classes. This is something Mike Cole barely hints at.

The corresponding fall of the women from first among equals, to subordinates of men, took place at the same time, but Mike Cole does not mention this. Schooling is gendered, as much as it is "classed".

At the same time as the division of society into antagonistic classes and the fall of women arrive, so do private property and the law of contract, the State to enforce the law of contract, and writing. This is the beginning of history.

Cole says:

“Formal schooling mediated by print and other sign systems produces age segregation and the institutionalized forms of hierarchy that articulate with the state or ecclesiastical institutions of which they are a part in a variety of ways.”

But schooling does not produce the State. The State is reproduced in the school.

The fact that classrooms universally, and from the time of the Sumerians, are laid out in the spreadsheet (and military) form of rows and columns, is not an accident. It “articulates with the State”. The medium is the message.

A Pedagogy of the Oppressed requires a dialogue format, or what is called a “boardroom”, as opposed to a “classroom”, or “theatre”.

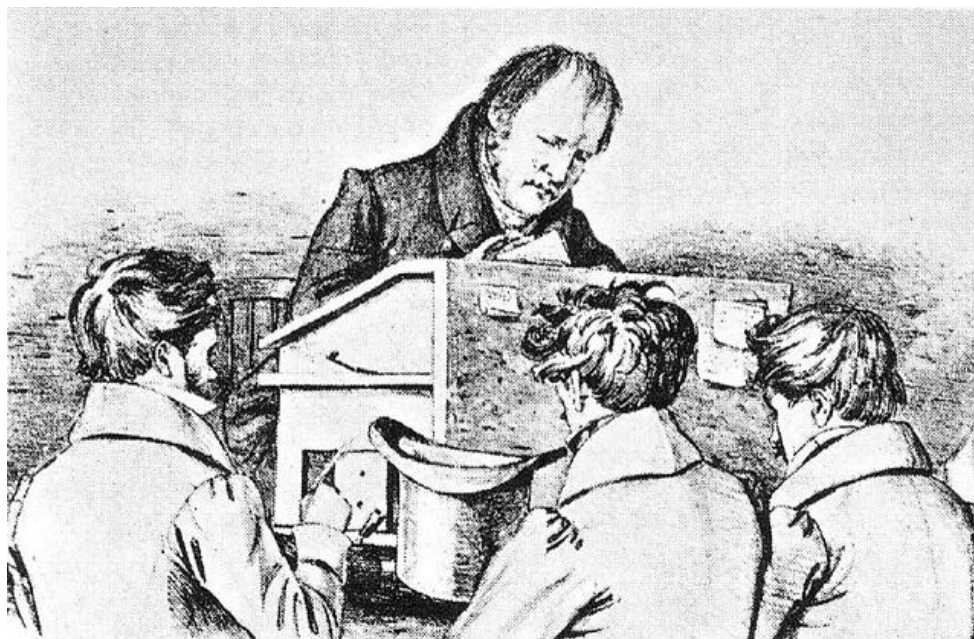
Having missed so many things, or deliberately omitted them, Cole proceeds to problematise “enculturation” as something outside of or parallel to the formal schooling system, that requires to be brought back in, or to be managed in some other way.

One can easily understand the narrowness of the schooling that Cole describes. But whether what he calls “nature’s multicolored, multicultural, enormously heterogeneous forms” can be added on, is questionable. On the contrary, what is more clearly required is a return to humanism, where humanism is not corrupted by class struggle. This would be a true Pedagogy of the Oppressed. It would be a Pedagogy of Revolution.

The attached text includes the references relating to the other two parts of the full essay that have already been given.

The next item is one of Andy Blunden’s writings about Hegel, where we may discover the beginnings of a more humanistic way of reclaiming education for the oppressed.

- **The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Cole, Perspectives, Part 3, Way Forward, 2005](#).**



Hegel and students

Hegel, ‘Inventor of historical relativism’

It is time to start preparing for where we are going with this course on “Education”. So in preparation for the third part of our course I consulted Andy Blunden, philosopher, educationalist, secretary of the [Marxists Internet Archive](#), world authority on Hegel, and good friend of South Africa. Here is an edited version of our correspondence. I am “VC”; Comrade Andy is “AB”.

VC

For the third week [of the CU “Education” course], I am going to split Cole's "Cross-cultural and historical perspectives &c" into three, and then for the fourth item in that week I want to use your "The Young Hegel and what drove him" [attached].

I think that the two initial weeks will serve to describe, as well as to distinguish, "education" in the pre-historic and in the historic, and finally hint at the location of Hegel as the necessary philosopher of human development, which strand can then be picked up later on.

What I would ask from you if at all possible is that you help me to find the source of the allegation of Hegel's alleged racism, which you refer to in the following paragraph in "The Young Hegel and what drove him":

"His misogyny and racism, which led him to exclude women and the peoples of uncivilized nations from being creators of culture, derived from his blindness to the fact of the cultural construction of the human form itself. Although this is a limitation in his philosophy, it is one which is very easy to correct for given all that we know today, 200 years later, and has had little impact on his Logic."

Working in the South African context we probably need a bit more than this. It's time to bite this bullet, show up all of Hegel's racism if it in fact exists, and then to show how in spite of this weakness, Hegel managed to produce a universal theory of human development which rendered the justification of racism impossible. And that so far, this one of Hegel's is the only extant universalist theory of development that can take us forward, and underpin revolution once again, as it did in 1848.

Simply: if I am not mistaken, it is from Hegel that the universal view of history that Engels, for example, expressed so confidently [e.g. in "[The Origin of the Family, Private Property and the State](#)"], gets its philosophical underpinning. This vital connection is threatened, or undermined, by the allegation that Hegel was a racist.

AB

The problem is: how to draw a line between Nature and Nurture. All the time we are learning more about how what has always been taken as natural, is in fact a product of culture. In Hegel's day, he presumed like everyone else, without exception, that the differences between genders and between peoples were given by Nature once for all. He knew that people made their own history, but he did not realise that the human form itself was a product of labour. That was Marx and Engels' insight, thanks to Darwin. Hegel had been dead for 45 years by then.

Hegel is in fact the inventor of historical relativism and the idea that truth is a cultural and historical product. So there is a real irony in someone writing in the 2000s accusing Hegel of being a racist. The very concept of racism would be impossible without Hegel.

I'll give you some links from Hegel: [[here](#), [here](#), [here](#) and [here](#).]

VC

Thanks Andy [for references in Hegel's work]. If this is as bad as it gets, then I don't think there is really a problem.

This bit of Hegel: *"a pastoral people may treat hunters as barbarians, and both of these are barbarians from the point of view of agriculturists, &c. The civilised nation is conscious that the rights of barbarians are unequal to its own and treats their autonomy as only a formality"* is a very familiar story to Africans. It's also surely more descriptive than didactic

I remember when we were in Mazimbu at the ANC school ("SOMAFSCO"), one of the Tanzanians who had grown a crop, when it was demolished by the cattle of the Masai nomads who used to come there at a certain time of the year, killed one of the Masai because of it.

The hunter-gatherers of the Kalahari are only a few hours from Johannesburg.

"The civilised nation is conscious that the rights of barbarians are unequal to its own and treats their autonomy as only a formality" describes the French, this week, in Mali. It's nothing but the truth. There is no sense of approval from Hegel, unless I am missing something.

Hegel is correctly describing these matters in "economic" terms, and that is not the same as describing them in racial terms. Africans have generally understood the difference, I think.

Thanks especially for your unequivocal "The very concept of racism would be impossible without Hegel." This is where we are at, still relying on Hegel after all these years, yet hardly able to see him or be aware of him there in the basement, holding up the whole structure.

AB

The relation between the descriptive and the normative, i.e., whether Hegel is just describing how history works, or whether he actually approves this, is not simple. When Hegel says this is how history works, there is a fair measure of implicit approval in that. As in the words "progressive" and "reactionary." This kind of "master narrative" accusation does stick against Hegel, but it is easy to read Hegel for our times with a greater understanding of these problems than was possible for a European philosopher who had never been outside of a monocultural Germany, and

relied on the reports of missionaries and colonists to know about life outside of Europe and North America.

What is important here, for our course on Education, is the confirmation that there is one humanity, and that this humanity is developed by the humans themselves, in labour. The humanist foundation of these ideas left by the Ancients, the Renaissance and the Enlightenment, was built upon by G W F Hegel, and further built upon by two students of Hegel's work called Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

Hegel is the necessary philosopher of human development, and hence, of education.

Marx and Engels, though well familiar with philosophy, did not write very much philosophy. They relied upon Hegel. Andy Blunden, in the attached essay, writes: *"Hegel drew the conclusion that the German Revolution would have to be made with philosophy rather than with guns and mobs."*

This is in fact largely how things turned out in the 1840s, a decade after Hegel's death, as described by Engels in 1886 in "[Ludwig Feuerbach, Part 1: Hegel](#)", where Engels writes:

"...it was the period of Germany's preparation for the Revolution of 1848; and all that has happened since then in our country has been merely a continuation of 1848, merely the execution of the last will and testament of the revolution. Just as in France in the 18th century, so in Germany in the 19th, a philosophical revolution ushered in the political collapse."

The 1848 spate of revolutions, which engulfed Germany among many other countries, was powered by the philosophical controversies that preceded it, which were in turn the legacy of G W F Hegel.

The legacy of Hegel has never been surpassed and it remains capable of powering revolutionary actions. In particular, Hegel's legacy still has the potential to revolutionise education. For this reason, we will return to Hegel later in the course.

Andy Blunden's Home Page is [here](#). His index page of links to his writings is [here](#).

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The Young Hegel and what drove him, 2007, Andy Blunden](#).
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[N F S Grundtvig, 1783–1872](#)

School for Life

“A folk high school becomes what it is because of the individuals of which it is made. Learning happens across social positions and differences – the teacher learns from the student and vice versa in a living exchange and mutual teaching. For Grundtvig dialogue across differences was essential – the ideal was that people must learn to bear with the differences of each other before enlightenment can be realized.”

[\(Wikipedia entry on Folk High School\)](#)

N F S Grundtvig was the pioneer of the idea of the “Folk High School”, the first of which was established by some of his followers, in Denmark, in 1844.

The Danish Folk High Schools continue to flourish up to today and are now more numerous than ever.

As we would expect, Denmark’s history is both different and similar to that of other countries.

In step with other Western European continental countries, Denmark passed through two major transitions: abolition of serfs, co-incident with the French revolution in the

late 18th Century; and institution of bourgeois democracy, co-incident with the widespread revolutions of 1848.

Insofar as these were unilateral reversals of previous power and property relations, they were violent. But Danes are apt to say that they never had any revolutions; by which they mean that the bloodshed and carnage that accompanied revolutionary change elsewhere, was absent in the case of Denmark.

Denmark moved, in the 19th Century, from being an extremely divided population, of which the larger part was rural, uneducated, poor and insecure, to being a modern and much more homogenous society of near-universal literacy.

Denmark became a nation, in the sense of the word “nation” that we in South Africa use when we speak of nation-building, which is to say both democratic, and educated. Or, we might more pointedly say: educated, and thereby democratic.

For the purposes of this CU course on Education, the most remarkable, typical characteristic of the Folk High School is that there is no prior educational requirement for entry to the school, and no “qualifications” are issued by the school. This is also how the Communist University works: no entry barrier, and no certificate on exit.

The Danish Folk High Schools did not, and still do not, replace formal education, and did not compete with it or diminish formal education in any way. Quite to the contrary, the informal Folk High Schools complement the formal academic establishment in an entirely benevolent and beneficial manner. This complementarity was part of Grundtvig’s intention when he wrote of the “School for Life”.

What the Folk High Schools did in total was to provide a way in which the level of education among the entire population could be raised in the present time. The formal education system alone could not do this.

Formal education is by nature compartmentalised. Each topic stands apart from all of the others. Formal education as such is predominately confined to the early years of life. The vast provision of resources to formal education must of necessity be concentrated in this way.

This being the case, and in the absence of any other process, it becomes a matter of wishful thinking, or else of resignation to a process lasting many generations, to speak of a general raising of the educational level, if no other thing is done.

In South Africa, the formal education system appears to be fully developed, quantitatively, in the sense that all children are enrolled for entry to school. The

system does produce engineers, doctors and other professionals, sufficient for the country's needs. But the drop-out rate is enormous, and even of those who complete schooling, a large proportion remain functionally illiterate and innumerate.

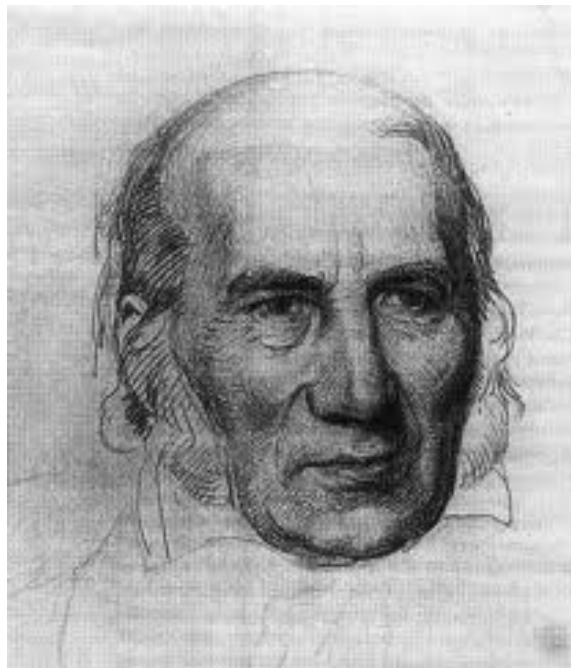
In short, the formal education system is failing to raise the general level of education in the country. This has been the case for generations past, and although there is change for the better in the system, yet those who have been and are still being abandoned are many.

Common expressions of desire for "life-long learning" in South Africa are not matched by corresponding practical provisions, most of the time. Employers are often reluctant to provide.

The strong faith in formal education that exists in bureaucratic and in political circles in South Africa, has up to now driven down all attempts to establish informal and general educational initiatives, whether on the lines of the Danish Folk High Schools, or any other.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The School for Life, 1838, N F S Grundtvig, Excerpt #1.](#)

Education, Part 4a



[N F S Grundtvig, 1783–1872](#)

Grundtvig, Message, Achievement and Comparisons

N F S Grundtvig built a nation, peacefully, through education.

This is a large but reasonable claim.

Not that Grundtvig built any folk high schools. But he was the “vanguard” of the folk-high-school movement and of the corresponding mass democratic movement that made Denmark the nation that it is.

Grundtvig’s message, in the excerpts that we are using, is made up of a few simple juxtapositions. The Dead and the Living. The Latin and the Danish. Development and Enlightenment *versus* their opposites. This is a dialectical method and therefore, a developmental method, where “development” is taken in the Hegelian sense.

German war on Denmark

In South Africa, we speak of People’s Education for People’s Power. We speak of Education for Liberation. This is in the context of our liberation struggle against apartheid and “colonialism of a special type”. Denmark also had a political context of national liberation.

Denmark is adjacent to the much more powerful state of Germany, which made war on Denmark in 1864, and seized the Danish Province of Schleswig-Holstein. This event caused a sense of great urgency in the mass education movement in Denmark. Education had become a matter of survival. Revival of old national symbols would not be enough to sustain national cohesion.

What these Danes successfully negotiated in the 19th Century is in many ways analogous to what is happening now in South Africa, and in other countries, and the theories of Grundtvig are comparable to those of other liberation educationalists (and by the way, just to mention: liberation theologians, as well).

Freire and Tagore Compared to Grundtvig

A world-wide sense of crisis in education has stimulated continuing interest in the general provision of educational service to the existing populations as a whole.

In Cuba, there is talk of “The nation becoming a university”, and we will look at that in our next item.

Our own South African “Communist University” is another such attempt.

We continue to look for other examples, and other strands of discourse to learn from.

One of these is the Grundtvigian scholarship that continues to be centred on Denmark, but with correspondents around the world. The Danish language in which much of this special dialogue has taken place over the last two centuries remains a barrier. Grundtvig's own extensive writings, speeches and sermons are hardly published in English at all. We are lucky to have access the one-volume collection called "The School for Life", plus some copies of learned specialist magazines that have some articles in English.

Some of these compare Grundtvig's approach in popular education to that of Paulo Freire, author of "The Pedagogy of the Oppressed", and to that of [Rabindranath Tagore](#), the famous exponent and moderniser of Bengali culture, who was also a contemporary, friend and collaborator of M K Gandhi's.

These comparisons are helpful. The three are complementary. Comparison illuminates by contrast the peculiar positive characteristics of each of them (this was also Grundtvig's view).

What they all had in common was that they gave tactical substance to the strategic impetus towards general education of their respective populations as a whole.

Freire

The Brazilian, Paulo Freire, who was strongly associated with the mid-to-late 20th-century "Liberation Theology" movement centred on South America, with both Protestant and Catholic strands, confronted a similar problematic to the one that faced Grundtvig.

This was a peasant or "campesino" population, left behind, in a situation where an older order was crumbling.

The Communist University has relied upon the teachings of Paulo Freire from its beginning, and we have dealt, separately and in more depth during this course, with Freire's particular contribution.

Here, we can remark that Freire's dialogical principle of education corresponds almost exactly to the Grundtvigian statement provided at the top of the introduction to the previous item (noting of course that the statement comes from Wikipedia, and not from Grundtvig's own pen).

What is different is Freire's reference to the political oppression of the learners. Freire says that education cannot properly happen without constant, consistent recognition of the oppressive circumstances surrounding the educational initiative and process. We take that from Freire.

Tagore

Rabindranath Tagore was the one out of these three who, as a relatively wealthy man, started and funded a school from his own pocket – [Patha Bhavana](#) at [Santiniketan](#). Whether its principles were similar to those of Grundtvig and Freire is hard to tell. Patha Bhavana does seem to have owed a lot to Tagore's rather idiosyncratic and spontaneous inspirations, varying from time to time.

What Tagore seems to have done in general in his life is to bring his own exquisite and highly-developed Brahmin culture to the masses of Bengal.

Particularly in terms of the songs that he wrote, and which became enormously and lastingly popular, Tagore is credited with creating a modern (Bengali) nation through education and culture.

This is really what Tagore has in common with Grundtvig and with Freire, and what is most useful for our CU course on education. Because we are seeking by any and every means possible, to expand the common and general culture of the South African population.

Summary, on formality and informality

In South Africa we find a relentless and apparently insurmountable urge to destroy the informal and to replace it with the formal. This is not only in education, but it is especially strong in the field of education. It is something shared between the old and the new regimes of South Africa, pre-and post-1994.

For communists, who seek a society without class, and therefore without a state, the rush towards the formal and away from self-management is dismaying. But in practice the informal, the general, is the stuff of daily life and cannot in that sense be suppressed. Nor is formal education going to be suppressed. What N F S Grundtvig showed was that the formal and the informal could co-exist, and that it was necessary for them to do so. This was the foundation of the Danish nation.

The Communist University has never been sponsored, but it has always been supported by learners. It is informal in the way of the Danish folk-high-schools.

The struggle continues.

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [The School for Life, 1838, N F S Grundtvig, Excerpt #2](#).



Cuba: A Nation Becoming a University

Universalisation of the University

The central idea within the German Karl Marx's "Capital", and within the Brazilian Paulo Freire's "Pedagogy of the Oppressed", is the full restoration of the human Subject as an individual, within human society, making humanity out of a material world.

This dialectic of the individual and the collective was well expressed by Marx and his friend Frederick Engels when they wrote, in the Communist Manifesto of 1848:

"In place of the old bourgeois society, with its classes and class antagonisms, we shall have an association in which the free development of each is the condition for the free development of all."

The SACP's constitutional stricture is to "Educate, Organise and Mobilise". Education is the means by which organising and mobilising are done. Education is more than a preparation for politics. Education is the method of politics and the substance of politics, which, when considered broadly, excludes all other substances. Education is the essence of humanism.

We have looked at N F S Grundtvig's vanguard role in relation to the Danish Folk-High-Schools, institutions which played a major part in the reconstruction of that country as a modern nation, even though bourgeois, and even though still having a king or a queen.

In the present time another and more advanced illustration of the idea of education as the substance of political practice is Cuba, a country that has become one big university, and a “society of knowledge”.

Please see the article (download linked below) by the US philosopher Cliff DuRand for an exposition of this concept, including what is called the “[Universalisation of the University](#)”.

“Raising the cultural and educational level of the entire [Cuban] population has become a central focus,” writes DuRand.

This is what South Africa needs to do, for all the reasons mentioned by DuRand, and for additional reasons having to do with our own history.

As is the case with China, in relation to town planning, for example, where the Chinese are the leaders in the world today, Cuban literature on educational theory is hard, or practically impossible, to find in English translation on the Internet.

Cliff DuRand has done a good job with this article in terms of problematising education in the Cuban context, and showing how education can be seen as the answer to nation-building problems even in what appear to be unfavourable circumstances, such as youth unemployment, and what he calls “class closure”.

In the next item, concluding this part, we will have Frantz Fanon’s (Martinique; Algeria) views about development and education, with reference to countries Africa that had newly become independent at the time of his writing.

As a taster, here is one sentence from Fanon that fits well with DuRand’s article:

“If nationalism is not made explicit, if it is not enriched and deepened by a very rapid transformation into a consciousness of social and political needs, in other words into humanism, it leads up a blind alley.”

- The above is to introduce the original reading-texts: [Cuba - A Nation Becoming a University, DuRand, MRZine](#).
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Frantz Fanon, 1925 - 1961

We must not voodoo the people

In the well-known chapter from “The Wretched of the Earth” called “Pitfalls of National Consciousness”, Frantz Fanon says things like:

“In its beginnings, the national bourgeoisie of the colonial countries identifies itself with the decadence of the bourgeoisie of the West. We need not think that it is jumping ahead; it is in fact beginning at the end. It is already senile before it has come to know the petulance, the fearlessness or the will to succeed of youth.”

After such denunciations, it is quite easy to overlook the more positive, last third of this essay, in which Fanon the freedom fighter and psychologist seeks to prescribe what the newly-independent ex-colonial country, which he refers to as the under-developed country, should do; and this mostly has to do with education.

For example:

“Everything can be explained to the people, on the single condition that you really want them to understand.”

*“Now, political education means opening their minds, awakening them, and allowing the birth of their intelligence; as Césaire said, it is 'to invent souls'. To educate the masses politically does not mean, cannot mean making a political speech. What it means is to try, relentlessly and passionately, to teach the masses that everything depends on them; that if we stagnate it is their responsibility, and that if we go forward it is due to them too, that there is no such thing as a demiurge, that there is no famous man who will take the responsibility for everything, but that the demiurge is the people themselves and **the magic hands are finally only the hands of the people.**”*

*“The collective struggle presupposes collective responsibility at the base and collegiate responsibility at the top. Yes; everybody will have to be compromised in the fight for the common good. No one has clean hands; **there are no innocents and no onlookers.** We all have dirty hands; we are all soiling them in the swamps of our country and in the terrifying emptiness of our brains. Every onlooker is either a coward or a traitor.”*

*“The duty of those at the head of the movement is to have the masses behind them. Allegiance presupposes awareness and understanding of the mission which has to be fulfilled; in short, an intellectual position, however embryonic. **We must not voodoo the people,** nor dissolve them in emotion and confusion.”*

*“To educate the masses politically is to make the totality of **the nation a reality to each citizen.** It is to make the history of the nation part of the personal experience of each of its citizens.”*

- The above is to introduce the original reading-text: [Frantz Fanon, Pitfalls of National Consciousness, 1963, Part 3.](#)

Here are some words from the Conclusion to Fanon's "The Wretched of the Earth":

“Let us try to create the whole man, whom Europe has been incapable of bringing to triumphant birth.

“All the elements of a solution to the great problems of humanity have, at different times, existed in European thought. But Europeans have not carried out in practice the mission which fell to them, which consisted of bringing their whole weight to bear violently upon these elements, of modifying their arrangement and their nature, of changing them and, finally, of bringing the problem of mankind to an infinitely higher plane.

“Today, we are present at the stasis of Europe.

“Two centuries ago, a former European colony decided to catch up with Europe. It succeeded so well that the United States of America became a monster, in which the taints, the sickness and the inhumanity of Europe have grown to appalling dimensions.

“Comrades, have we not other work to do than to create a third Europe?”

Course: Education

23001, Education, Intro Booklet 1 of 2

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